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Stanley Hong
Tourism not "us" and "them"

HVB chief urges Molokai's help in tourism

KALUAKOI, Molokai — Citing tourism as the best economic hope of all the islands, Stanley Hong, president of the Hawaii Visitors Bureau, yesterday urged Molokai residents to get involved in tourism development on their island.

In remarks prepared for delivery to the Molokai Chamber of Commerce, Hong urged residents to get involved in community review of proposed tourism development. "Let your voice be heard," Hong said. "Take some responsibility for the way the development comes about.

"Work with others so that any new venture on Molokai becomes something created in part by Molokai's own people . . . then support it and help make it work."

"Tourism in Hawaii should not be a matter of 'us' and 'them,'" he said.

The HVB president said he believes developers today are more concerned with quality than they were 20 years ago.

Hong said he sees no conflict in the need to preserve Molokai's environment and the need for growth. The quality and direction of that growth, he said, can be in the hands of Molokai residents.

Hong noted there is a new burst of resort and hotel planning that when completed will mean about 20,000 new hotel rooms and thousands more condominium units. Some are planned for Molokai and the community has expressed concern.

Hong said he does not want to see Hawaii disappear under concrete and asphalt. "At the same time," he said, "I don't want to see the islands decay through a lack of a viable economy."

Quality tourism, Hong said, is the state's "best economic hope."

"If, because of our geography and our distances, we have to put most of our eggs into the visitor basket, then we'd better join in and become a part of that visitor experience."

While the state looks for other industries to help carry the load, Hong said, the tourist industry must be made as strong and healthy as possible to "help maintain the kind of life Hawaii's people want for themselves."

Hong observed that he, too, has "great memories of a Hawaii that was uncrowded and unspoiled from Hanalei to South Point."

The unfortunate tendency, he said, is to blame tourism for the passing of that unspoiled time. "The fact is, we are witnessing a social revolution. Times are changing," he said.

"Now," he said, "we must make sure that what we have is saved for the future."